




Speech By
Cynthia Lui

MEMBER FOR COOK

Record of Proceedings, 10 March 2021

WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING (PLASTIC ITEMS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (3.00 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020. There is absolutely no doubt that single-use plastics have been harming our environment and wildlife for decades. Single-use plastics were created for easy disposal right after use. The disposal of single-use plastics comes after decades of learned behaviour, behaviour we now know needs to be unlearned.

Plastic is used in an extensive range of applications. Its low cost has made it an attractive material for single-use convenience items used at home and away from home; at point of sale in cafes, restaurants and at events; and in places where hygienic application is required such as hospitals and aged-care facilities. Plastic consumption and, therefore, production has increased exponentially over several decades. The global production and use of plastics has historically not been matched with effective mechanisms to address plastic overconsumption, waste and pollution or the environmental impacts.

Waste management is a huge problem for my communities in the Cook electorate. Again, my communities are challenged by remoteness, making it extremely difficult and costly to effectively manage waste. This important legislative reform will be of great benefit to many small communities in my electorate to reduce the unnecessary plastic waste going into landfill and to prevent the future harm posed by plastics breaking down into microplastics, potentially choking wildlife and blocking animals' stomachs. I fully support the policy intent of the bill to reduce the availability of single-use plastic items that enter the environment as litter or may be disposed of in landfill to prevent harm to the environment and wildlife in the future.

I would like to give a shout-out to Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council in Cape York for their active approach to addressing waste in their community by setting up a recycling plant in community to address the ongoing challenges. Without strong legislation in place to ban single-use plastic we will continue to run the risk of single-use plastic items ending up in our landfills, our oceans and waterways and the environment.

The Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020 was originally referred to the Natural Resources, Agricultural Industry Development and Environment Committee in the 56th Parliament. The bill lapsed before it was debated in parliament when the 56th Parliament was dissolved in October 2020. The bill was introduced into the Legislative Assembly and was referred to the Health and Environment Committee on 3 December 2020. It is wonderful to see the great amount of public support for this important bill, and we can see why. It will benefit our communities so that our children and our children's children will get to enjoy our natural environment and wildlife for generations to come.

The purpose of the bill is to: enable a ban on the supply of single-use plastic items starting with straws, stirrers, plates and cutlery; and achieve a reduction in plastic pollution resulting from single-use plastic by 20 per cent by 2023. The committee's task was to consider the policy to be achieved by the legislation and the application of fundamental legislative principles, that is, to consider whether the bill

has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and to the institution of parliament. The committee also examined the bill for compatibility with human rights in accordance with the Human Rights Act 2019.

The bill is part of a larger government strategy to address issues in relation to plastic overconsumption, waste and pollution, and the resulting environmental impacts. To see the impact of plastics pollution on the environment and the actions of communities in tackling these issues, the committee conducted site visits and hearings in Cairns and Yeppoon. The committee was genuinely impressed with the vision, effort and commitment of stakeholders such as Jennie Gilbert, founder of the Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre on Fitzroy Island, and the young founder of Straw No More. I note that the committee visited BlackBird Espresso and met with business owner Mr Troy Furner and Ms Helen Reilley from Plastic Free Cairns to see the range of currently available non-plastic recyclable and reusable food and drink containers. It is wonderful to see that there is already that level of community action in developing and promoting solutions for hospitality businesses to move away from single-use plastics to reduce plastic waste and to address the environmental impact into the future.

The issue of plastics ending up in our landfills or in our environment is not going to go away on its own. Yes, I acknowledge the member for Nanango's statement this morning that it was the LNP that announced their plan for the container refund scheme. However, it is actually the Labor government that is delivering and leading the way in protecting the environment in this state. The Palaszczuk government is absolutely committed to reducing plastics pollution and the devastating impact it has on our environment.

This important environmental reform is in addition to the introduction of the Queensland government's single-use lightweight plastic shopping bag ban and container refund scheme. It is enlightening to see the community expectation and strong support for government action in addressing other plastics. Ongoing consultation with impacted stakeholder groups will enable the identification of appropriate and effective solutions.

The bill supports delivery of the broader principles of the Queensland government's Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy released on 1 July 2019 and the aims of *Tackling plastic waste: Queensland's plastic pollution reduction plan* to reduce plastic waste and addresses the environmental and economic impacts of plastic.

I would like to congratulate the committee members and the committee chair on their hard work throughout the examination of the bill; and the former minister for the environment, Leeanne Enoch, and the current Minister for the Environment, Meaghan Scanlon, on their passion and strong advocacy to protect our environment for future generations to come. I commend the bill to the House.